

VZCZCXRO1312  
RR RUEHMA RUEHPA  
DE RUEHOS #0307/01 2010758  
ZNR UUUUU ZZH  
R 200758Z JUL 09  
FM AMCONSUL LAGOS  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 0885  
INFO RUEHUJA/AMEMBASSY ABUJA 0473  
RHMCSSU/DEPT OF ENERGY WASHINGTON DC  
RUEHZK/ECOWAS COLLECTIVE  
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHINGTON DC  
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC  
RHMFSS/HQ USAFRICOM STUTTGART GE  
RUZEJAA/JAC MOLESWORTH RAF MOLESWORTH UK

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 03 LAGOS 000307

SENSITIVE  
SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: PGOV PHUM KDEM NI

SUBJECT: NIGERIA: CALL ON ONDO GOVERNOR AND VISIT TO USG FOOD SECURITY PROGRAM ON CASSAVA

**¶11. (SBU) Summary:** On July 6, Ambassador made a call on Governor Olusegun Mimiko and his cabinet at the Governor's House, following a tour of the Matna Foods Cassava Processing Facility in Akure, Ondo State. Ambassador made introductory comments to the Governor's cabinet, highlighting the U.S. Mission's involvement in several programs in Ondo State, particularly dry cassava starch production, and the Mission's assistance on projects related to PEPFAR, education, and wealth creation. Afterward, the Ambassador met Governor Mimiko at the airport, where they had a discussion on a broad range of issues from food security to healthcare. Prior to the courtesy call, Ambassador visited the Matna Foods Cassava Processing Facility, an effort supported by the Global Food Security Response Program. Prior to the U.S. Mission's involvement, the facility was operating below capacity due to the irregularity of raw material. However, due to the results of a USAID-funded project promoting high-yield cassava with high starch content, the facility will have a year-round supply of cassava. The results of this initiative are year-round employment for workers at the farms and the production facility and an increase in production, which will fuel exports and agricultural sector growth. End summary.

Courtesy Call to Governor Mimiko at Governor's House

-----

**¶12. (SBU)** Ambassador first met with the Ondo State cabinet where she highlighted the U.S. Mission's support of several programs in Ondo State and the ability of those projects to create wealth for the state's citizenry and growth opportunities in a variety of sectors, including agriculture, healthcare, and education. Ambassador was thanked by the Minister of Agriculture, who also requested the U.S. Mission's assistance in improving the state's raw food processing ability as well as in agricultural research and development.

Ambassador Meets Governor Mimiko

-----

**¶13. (SBU)** Ambassador met Governor Olusegun Mimiko at the Ondo airport after the call at Governor's House. Ambassador congratulated the Governor on his election victory and for withstanding the ensuing lengthy legal battle, and began a discussion on a range of issues. Governor Mimiko stated there were initial challenges of putting his government together, and when Ambassador asked of his plans for local government elections, Mimiko stated that he is currently having an internal dialogue with his party. The Governor stated his intention to submit nominees within the next two weeks. In response to Ambassador's question regarding how Mimiko was selecting members of his electoral commission, the Governor stated that it was a difficult process and he wanted to choose a 'credible' person as chairman, but stressed he had no intention to "short-circuit the system." Ambassador stated that the Governor's appeal through the court system demonstrated how the rule of law should work over violence. Governor Mimiko noted that his term began in February 2009, when the legal dispute ended, thus he can now be solely

focused on implementing his agenda. In response to the Ambassador's question regarding working with the PDP-dominated House Assembly, the governor stated he does not have a "one on one" relationship with them, saying that one "cannot impose oneself on the people," in reference to the PDP. The Governor stated that electoral reform would not happen soon, but stated his support to fortify areas of general agreement between the parties.

**14.** (SBU) The Governor's vision for Ondo State revolves around agriculture. Mimiko's plans will focus on encouraging the cultivation of three main crops: cashews in the northern region, cocoa in the central areas, and palm oil in the south. He believes that along with cassava, these crops will drive the economy on a sustainable basis. While Mimiko speaks of assisting small farmers, he clearly has plans to help large-scale, commercial farms increase their crop yields through R&D, as well as granting long-term land leases. Governor Mimiko stated to the Ambassador that he intends to make maximum benefit of the state's location along Nigeria's coast. He is currently gauging interest for a deep sea port in the southwest part of the state, combined with a large-scale industrial park, with hopes to rival Lagos for commercial and investment opportunities. Mimiko spoke of an oil and gas logistics base concept, where firms who specialize in the sector can operate safely from Ondo State, with relatively easy access to the Delta region and Lagos. The Governor's intentions to build the industrial park are in Ore, where he also stated a natural gas line will pass through. Mimiko informed Ambassador that his state has signed a Memorandum of Understanding with Shell to create a natural gas map of the state.

#### National Issues

---

LAGOS 00000307 002 OF 003

**15.** (SBU) The most important issue nationally, according to the Governor, is the Niger Delta. Tied to the issues of the Delta are mass unemployment, which he approximated to be 60% in the area, and corruption. These two issues are all fed by the other, as stated by Mimiko, and cannot be solved as individual issues, rather, must be handled as a whole problem. Mimiko would not offer an assessment of the amnesty proposal, stating that there are far deeper issues that need to be tackled first. The lucrative trade of bunkering, for example, is an extremely challenging problem facing the government, with no simple solution. Another issue of national importance discussed was the Land Use Act of Nigeria and the concept of Governor's Consent. (Note: The Land Use Act requires that the consent of the Governor be obtained prior to any sale or purchase of property, further burdening investors in the real estate market with added cost, delay, and the absence of financial tools such as mortgage backed securities, found in the majority of markets. End Note.) Mimiko stated he would like to remove Governor's Consent and spoke of the clumsiness of the Land Use Act in its current form. He spoke of the inefficiency of having to wait two to three years in some instances while leases are delayed in the bureaucracy of the Governor's office. The Governor noted that a constitutional amendment was needed to change the Act, therefore he is not expecting a quick resolution. He stated that until there is an easy, seamless transfer system for property, enterprises will be wary of investing in Nigeria. In the interim, the Governor plans to digitize the land registry of Ondo State and implement a 14 day consent program, whereby citizens can expect his consent on lease agreements no more than 14 days after submitting it to the Governor's office. Mimiko states that this should work until a constitutional amendment is passed.

#### Plans for the Future

---

**16.** (SBU) Other issues discussed by Ambassador and Governor Mimiko include the Governor's idea to create a smart card for all the citizens of Ondo, which would be used in hospitals and government agencies. He stated a trial will begin shortly with 4,000 volunteers, and that the United Nations Development Program has commented positively on the idea of smart cards with biometric information. As a medical doctor, the Governor is interested in improving healthcare in the state, and told Ambassador of the

building of a mother/child hospital; creating more medical training programs, particularly in rural areas; encouraging local governments to employ doctors; and his goal of reducing child mortality rates in the next four years. On security issues, the Governor stated that he would like to create community watch groups to complement police efforts. Mimiko intends to get the youth actively involved in these watch groups, which he believes will substantially reduce crime rates. Regarding kidnappings, the Governor stated that there have been one or two incidents recently, however they were mostly individual criminals and not affiliated with any larger organization. Ambassador commented on the U.S. Mission's involvement with the government of Kaduna in training the police to utilize bicycles for community policing and the effectiveness of the program. Ambassador offered to provide the Governor additional information on the bicycle program.

¶17. (SBU) Ambassador reiterated several projects the U.S. Mission is supporting in Ondo in support of Mimiko's initiatives, in particular, the cassava factory visit and how with the aid of the U.S. Mission through USAID, increased crop yields will assist over 500 farmers, increase production at the factory and exports, all resulting in job growth and wealth creation for the state. Ambassador concluded the meeting by providing the Governor with a list of all U.S. Mission sponsored projects in Ondo State, and projects supported nationally which have an impact on Ondo State.

Ambassador Visits MATNA Foods Cassava Processing Facility

---

¶18. (SBU) Prior to the meetings at Governor House and Governor Mimiko, Ambassador visited the MATNA Foods Cassava Processing Facility in Akure, Ondo. The facility is a beneficiary of a USAID-funded MARKETS project, which is part of the overall USG Food Security Program. The project promises high-yield cassava with high starch content. Ambassador toured the factory with the Managing Director of the facility, Mr. Dele Ogunlade, and his team, as well as with members from the state Ministry of Agriculture. Through this program, farmers are guaranteed a market for their high-yield cassava while the factory ensures that it will not operate below capacity any longer due to a shortage of raw cassava. Ambassador commented on how the collaboration of the U.S. Mission with local

LAGOS 00000307 003 OF 003

farmers was able to provide twin benefits to farmers and the factory, all in support of the state's goal to increase production.

¶19. (U) This cable was coordinated with Embassy Abuja.